

Logistics and Relief Commodities Sector Update

OCTOBER 2015

SECTOR OVERVIEW

As part of its efforts to ensure a rapid response to humanitarian emergencies around the world, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)—the lead U.S. Government (USG) office for international disaster response—stores emergency relief supplies at strategically located warehouses in Miami, Florida; Pisa, Italy; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; and Subang, Malaysia. Stockpiled humanitarian relief commodities include blankets, hygiene kits, kitchen sets, water containers, and plastic sheeting for emergency shelter.

In addition to facilitating the storage of emergency relief commodities, USAID/OFDA deploys logistics personnel when a disaster strikes to assist directly with USG response efforts. With the support of Washington, D.C.-based specialists, logistics personnel manage the transport and consignment of relief commodities to USAID/OFDA partners operating in disaster-affected areas. USAID/OFDA's Logistics Unit provides technical assistance to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, and host government counterparts in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The unit also supports disaster risk reduction efforts to mitigate the impact of future disasters.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, through grants and in-kind contributions to humanitarian partners, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$340 million for emergency relief commodities and associated transport, as well as for other logistical support.



On August 24, the Ebola Disaster Assistance Response Team airlifted more than 16 tons of medical supplies and emergency equipment to Monrovia, Liberia, from USAID/OFDA's Dubai warehouse. (Photo by Carol Han/USAID)

IMPROVING LOGISTICS CAPACITY

USAID/OFDA continually seeks methods to reduce the impact of future disasters and improve response tools and resources to best address the needs of disaster-affected communities. During FY 2015, USAID/OFDA Logistics Unit initiatives, including partnerships with the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) and the Fritz Institute, strengthened its disaster preparedness capacity by bolstering relief commodity networks and investing in the training of logisticians throughout the world.

United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot

Responding to a disaster as quickly as possible is essential to reducing the negative impact of a disaster event on the affected location and population. USAID/OFDA strengthened its rapid response capacity in FY 2015 by joining UNHRD, which is a strategically located network of international depots with storage, relief commodity procurement facilities, and emergency transport services. The UNHRD network enhances USAID/OFDA's existing global stockpile and transport capabilities to make USAID/OFDA even more responsive to future disasters. Currently, the USG is stockpiling several critical relief commodities in the Subang UNHRD to ensure sufficient availability of pre-positioned supplies and improve USAID/OFDA's capacity to respond to future disasters in Asia.

Fritz Institute

Since 2006, USAID/OFDA has supported the Fritz Institute and its partner humanitarian organizations to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian logistics worldwide through the Fritz Institute's program for Certification in Humanitarian

Logistics. Designed using state-of-the-art logistics training from the commercial sector and adapted for the humanitarian context, the certification program focuses on building essential skills in supply chain and logistics operations management. Since the institute's launch in 2001, nearly 2,100 people working in 135 countries and representing more than 260 organizations—including UN agencies, national and international NGOs, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, governments, militaries, donors, academia, and private organizations—have benefitted from the logistics training. Focusing on front-line logisticians who may not otherwise be able to gain certification as a humanitarian logistician, a USAID/OFDA scholarship program awarded 41 logisticians full scholarships to participate in the training in FY 2015, bringing the total number of USAID/OFDA-awarded scholarships to 154 to date. The Fritz Institute certification is highly respected and often required for logistics positions with leading humanitarian organizations throughout the world. Therefore, USAID/OFDA's scholarship program not only trains a new cadre of qualified logisticians to respond to humanitarian disasters, but also opens up new job opportunities for scholarship recipients.

USAID/OFDA IMPROVES RAPID RESPONSE TO MEET ACUTE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

In FY 2015, USAID/OFDA deployed logisticians to support seven disasters in 10 countries; the support included technical assistance and more than 60 shipments of emergency relief commodities.

Nepal Earthquake

Within hours of the magnitude 7.8 earthquake that struck Nepal on April 25, USAID/OFDA deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), including two U.S.-based Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams, to assist in the international response. These highly specialized USAR teams joined the international effort to rescue people trapped in collapsed or partially collapsed structures amidst dangerous aftershocks.



Members of the USAID/OFDA Logistics Unit confer on the runway in Kathmandu. (Photo by Duncan Cohen/USAID)

The DART also included three USAID/OFDA logisticians who, in coordination with the Washington, D.C.-based Logistics Unit, managed the transport of more than 360 metric tons (MT) of emergency relief commodities to Nepal to meet the immediate needs of earthquake-affected communities. The logisticians worked closely with the U.S. and Nepalese militaries, NGO partners, the UN, and other international organizations to deliver USAID/OFDA-supplied plastic sheeting and emergency medical supplies. Overall, the team helped procure, transport, and consign 6,200 rolls of heavy-duty plastic sheeting—or 62,000 tarps—sufficient to provide up to 310,000 people with emergency shelter in the immediate aftermath of the Nepal earthquake.

West Africa Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak

The Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak demanded a strong, coordinated effort to control EVD transmission and limit the loss of life among those affected by the deadly virus in West Africa. During FY 2015, USAID/OFDA played a leading role in coordinating USG response activities throughout Guinea, Liberia, Mali, and Sierra Leone where DART Logistics Unit staff collaborated with NGOs, UN agencies, and government partners to import, store, and distribute more than 435 MT of life-saving assistance, such as infrared thermometers, personal protective equipment, plastic sheeting, and water storage and purification kits that were essential to breaking the chain of EVD transmission.

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